

Merced County Farm Bureau



CDFA Listening Session, Tulare, July 2, 2008

Secretary AG Kawamura & Board President Al Montna:

Merced County Farm Bureau has been calling for a plan for agriculture for many years now and is pleased to have the opportunity to have an impact on that plan with CDFA. Thank you for the opportunity to paint our picture but also to have an impact on re-framing the discussion on a plan for agriculture for future generations.

What is your vision for California agriculture by 2030?

Agriculture is the foundation of our national security policy and California leads the nation in agricultural production. We have protected our greatest asset, the ability to feed ourselves. The fertile valleys, hills, forests and rivers supply the food, fiber, nursery and forest products for California and the world. Affordable, efficient water storage and conveyance systems, flow with water for agriculture, manufacturing, environmental and urban needs. Our diverse and abundant crops and products allow us to compete globally in the world marketplace secure in knowing we will not be relying on foreign nations to supply our food.

Urban farms and gardens are an important part of the fabric of our communities. The rural farms and businesses are supported by a legislature and governmental agencies that understand, respect and safeguard our working landscapes.

Communities that supply jobs to local residents are flourishing with healthy families and manufacturing and industry that supports the ag based economy with the latest in innovative technology. Value added ag products are abundant adding strength to the overall economic picture for California.

California has led the way the last two decades in innovative and cutting edge technology in the alternative energy and water conservation industries. Developing and manufacturing the technology has opened new paths for employment and resource management. The San Joaquin Valley farms and ranches have led the way with solar energy and technology uses.

What will be the biggest challenge in achieving that Vision?

Bringing agriculture together to speak as a united voice.

Changing our growth patterns for urban development. An inventory of land must be sustainable and affordable to produce our crops and commodities.

A regulatory environment that is based on an understanding of the impacts and costs of rules and regulations for the men and women who produce the over 350 uniquely California products.

Finding a solution to the litigation tactics that have been the norm for decades in regards to water, land use and regulations. Positive action, not reaction can bring about solutions without wasting huge amounts of money in the court system.

In 2030, how as the public perception of agriculture changed?

Beginning in the summer of 2008 agriculture organizations, commodity groups and others came together, contributing 10% of their existing marketing and advertising budgets to bring our message to the public. Because the campaign was successful, with this united effort, the public understood the strategic importance of a domestic food supply to our national security. The public supports the farming communities. They have demanded that our elected officials take action to preserve and protect the integrity of the working farms and ranches with policies in place that safeguard our natural resources, including the men and women who work the land.

Recognizing that land is a finite resource, the cities have incorporated strong growth policies that have kept development within the urban boundaries, allowing city residents access to fresh, local produce and products from neighboring farms, ranches and businesses. Building up, infill development and a jobs/housing balance are a few of the many policies put in place in 2008 to value the many benefits from a vibrant and productive agriculture industry.

Agriculture has been a leading example with technology for alternative energy solutions and alternatives. These advancements have brought a real and measurable improvement in the lives of all Californians. Support and respect for the innovators in agriculture is wide spread.

What is a "must have" in an AG Vision for California?

Immediate action to address the water crisis we currently face because of decades of inaction. Increased water storage and an efficient conveyance system to move water throughout the state to meet the needs of all Californians, recognizing the top priority is producing a safe domestic food supply.

The latest water conservation and energy technology is incorporated on the farms and ranches, businesses, homes and governmental agencies produced in California by Californians.

Mitigation for ag land conversion is a requirement at a minimum of 4:1.

APHIS has been moved back to USDA where it belongs, not under the Dept. of Homeland Security and has adequate funding.

Review and evaluation of existing laws and regulations that impact the production of our food supply. What is the goal and how is it being accomplished? Are they effective? Are they cost prohibiting? Are they leading to the outsourcing of our food supply? These and many more questions need to be addressed before we move forward. We are over burdened with regulations at all levels of government that are not based on peer-reviewed science or any knowledge of the industry they regulate. Common sense and coordination is sorely lacking today and cannot continue in the future if agriculture is to remain viable and economically feasible to the producers and processors of our food supply

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Diana Westmoreland Pedrozo
Executive Director